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EGOSOPHY

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "THE PRIGMENT"
ETC.

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P R E F A C E.

THE object at which an immense proportion of our fellow-creatures are aiming is so evidently the pleasing of self, that it is a matter of legitimate surprise that scarcely any treatises exist upon that subject in the abstract. If to serve himself is the end of man, it must be the most important of all sciences. Now the Exercises of St. Ignatius, or, as they are more frequently called, Ignatian Retreats, constitute the most renowned system for

studying the End of Man; I therefore propose to write a short treatise upon pleasing one's self, as the End of Man, on the system followed in those Exercises.

Let not any one suppose that this little book will consist of the Ignatian Exercises "writ backwards." An attempt thus to write them would soon convince the scribe that my object could not have been attained in this way. It is true that the End selected by St. Ignatius was very different from that chosen by my imaginary egoist; but I have aimed directly at my own target, from first to last, without trying either to reverse or to

confirm any of the teachings of the philosopher whose system of working I have adopted.

Moreover, I have too much respect for the Exercises of St. Ignatius to attempt a travesty of them; although, were I to do so, I should scarcely be more presumptuous than certain ministers of religion, who, although not even of the same faith as St. Ignatius, themselves untaught, profess to teach others on the principle of that distinguished theologian.

It must be distinctly understood, at starting, that I refrain from expressing any opinion of my own as to whether it is better to please one's self or to

please others. My sole reason for writing this book is, that if, as would appear from the conduct of the majority of the human race, to please self is a science of the utmost moment, a treatise ought to be written upon that science.

I address myself, accordingly, exclusively to the egoist, and in these pages I shall endeavour to show him how to attain the object of his ambition. We have our Theosophy; why should we not also have our Egosophy? It is the only word that I can frame to express the science about to be described, and it is so hideous that I hope it may never be used

again. Thus far, I have treated of it as a science only ; as a religion I think I might claim that it has a greater number of adherents than any other.

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First Day.

FIRST I will ask you to make what St. Ignatius of Loyola calls a Composition of Place.

Imagine yourself sitting before your looking-glass. There behold the reflection of what is, to you, all and everything. The whole world only exists for the form reflected in that mirror, so far as you are concerned. Light and darkness, heat and cold, the past, the present, the future, earthquakes, wars, changes of government, the fortunes of nations and of individuals, are things for which you care nothing except as they affect

your own dear self. You are looking at the image of what you most admire, and of the only being whom you really love.

Once you were not : now you are ! The true spirit of the world is to keep a thing when you have got it, and to think yourself grievously wronged if you lose it ; but never to give a moment's thought to the manner by which you obtained it, or to feel an atom of gratitude towards the person to whom you owe it. Having, therefore, an existence, your main idea is to preserve it, and your greatest fear to lose it ; but as to its origin or its author you will not trouble your head for a single instant.

If you were unexpectedly to inherit a large property from an uncle, would you ever think how kind and good it

was of him to leave you such a beautiful place? Not you! For the first hour or two after hearing the good news, you might say that you were "a lucky beggar"—*you* mind: what the *uncle* was in leaving you the property would not enter into your considerations, the only point that would interest you would be your own relation to the event and not the uncle's—but in a very short time you would even have forgotten your "luck." You had no idea, you would soon be saying, that there were so many heavy expenses in coming into a property; the legacy-duty you would describe as a robbery, and you would declare that the old boy had left some of the farms in a disgraceful condition. Remember, I said at starting that I was placing you before a looking-glass,

and I did not intend its reflection to be limited to your outward man.

Well. It is not the possession of an estate which you are now contemplating; but of an existence. Are you considering the beneficence of its author? Again I say, not you!

The next point is:—Why are you? Your answer to that is simple. You neither know nor care. You are! That, you think, is enough. It would be hard lines, you say, if you were not. Why indeed should you not be? Was not your father before you? If there is any “why” about the matter at all, you think you may reply to it by saying that you exist on the principle of the survival of the fittest. Who so fit to survive as you?

For what end is the man, whose

reflection you are looking upon with such loving interest, in the mirror? Ah! that, you say, is a more practical question, and it admits of but one answer—for his own ends and nobody else's, for his own objects and his own interests!

When the literal end of the body you see represented before you is at hand, and you are lying on your death-bed, the best you can hope for will be, you think, to be able to say to yourself that you have had "a good time," (excuse the vernacular,) "a good innings," to leave the world having got all you could expect, and perhaps a little more, out of it—in short, to be thoroughly satisfied. To attain this happy condition, it will, of course, be necessary that you should not wish to live a day, nor an hour, nor a

minute longer; but these are mere matters of detail into which I need not enter at any length.

Assuming, however, that you should have no wish to live a moment longer, and that you should be thoroughly satisfied with all the good things which you have enjoyed, you would, I suppose, consider that the man, on whose image you are gazing, had completely fulfilled his end. I only want to be assured on that point. Yes; you say. Very well. So be it. That is eminently satisfactory.

And now I will venture to offer you a little advice, in your own spirit, mind, towards achieving that end.

“Life is short,” some one whispers in your ear. If that be the case, take care to do nothing to make it shorter.

To endanger your health would be a sin. I apologise for using that almost obsolete word.

Now I want you particularly to observe that the essential means of reaching the particular end at which you are aiming is to live solely and purely for self. A perfect end of this sort cannot otherwise be obtained. Nor must there be any half and half measures. In order to enter into this state of perfection, you must steadily, if gradually, divest yourself of all love or care for others. Quite apart from religion and morality, even nature herself will hamper you with much that you will have to get rid of; for got rid of it must be, if you would have this kind of happiness.

I will suppose that you have already

acquired the rudiments of egoism ; that the news of the burning to death of a hundred miners in a coal-pit, (somebody else's coal-pit,) within a mile of your own house, would not affect you in the least, that you only regret the death of an old friend because he will no longer amuse you, or because it reminds you that your own turn to die must come some day, that you regard your riches as something to be spent exclusively upon your own pleasures, and that you never entertain others unless they are likely to entertain you in return, or unless you will gain repayment by obtaining honour for the splendour of your hospitality.

All this is well, very well, so far as it goes ; but it is only the beginning

of the way of perfection—the particular perfection of which I am speaking. Before you attain to that, you must be in a condition which will be so stoical with regard to others, that if you hear that your beautiful and charming wife has got an incipient cancer, your only regrets will be that you will be deprived of the pleasure of her company and the honour of a brilliant hostess at your entertainments, and that owing to the comparative slowness of the disease, some months at least must elapse before her death; so that you will have to wait longer than you like before marrying another wife who will also be charming and beautiful. Delays, you know, are tedious.

When that cheery third boy of yours, who used to be so much

with you, "goes to the bad," bundle him off to the Antipodes, and cut him off with a shilling. You can settle the whole thing in an hour, and need never bother your head about him again. Don't see him before he starts, and if you receive a letter in his handwriting, just open it to see that it contains no enclosure and then burn it, unread. You will probably receive a good deal of sympathy. People will say, "Poor fellow, he has had a great deal of trouble about one of his sons." Should you hear, by-and-by, that the lad has died in great poverty in New Zealand, that need not disturb you, and there will be no further danger of the *mauvais sujet* reappearing to worry you.

Then if your golden-haired little

daughter begins to fade and gradually sinks into consumption: what of that? Have you not four sons to perpetuate your race, and will not they be all the richer? The little girl's hacking cough does not hurt *you*. Her pale cheeks do not lower the tone of yours; nor do her restless nights disturb the tranquillity of your own. Her breathing may be getting shorter and shorter, but so long as the wind of your hunters is good, your pleasures need not be much interfered with, as they might be if your horses' lungs were affected instead of your daughter's. When the spring comes, you will no longer see her coming from the wood, her little arms laden with hyacinths and anemones; but that wood will be none the less full of

pheasants for you to shoot, in the following autumn.

Perhaps you will say that it is distressing to witness her suffering. You must not witness it. The sight of pain is unpleasant; therefore do not look at it. What matter if the poor child keeps calling for "Father!" and asking why he, who used so often to come into the nursery to play with her, or to bring her toys and sweetmeats, never comes there now to amuse her in her long, weary illness, or if she wonders why she is never taken down now for that happy "children's hour" in which you used almost to worship her. Her disappointment, her tears, and her misery do not hurt you. A day will come, of course, when the crying will cease altogether, and a little pale-

faced figure, with long golden hair, will be lying quite still in one of the rooms of your house. You had better not go and see it. Never look at distressing objects! It is true that you will have to keep in seclusion for a decent period; but, after all, it will be better than if that seclusion had been enforced by your having a bad cold or a fit of the gout.

Even with regard to public opinion, you must be prepared to be indifferent. Generally speaking, the praise of others is grateful, and it is well to secure and enjoy it; but should anything, which is to you, personally, more desirable, come into conflict with it, then let public opinion go to the wall. Even your credit with the world must

not be permitted to interfere with the gratification of yourself.

I have now roughly sketched the beautiful character of a perfect man (of the egoist type), and you must bear in mind that to obtain the happiness of egoism, you must have *perfect* egoism. Partial egoism will not suffice. Complete egoism only will gain that End of Man of which I have been treating.

There are other ends which satisfy other people. Some men seem to consider that they fulfil their destinies by sitting in arm-chairs in club-windows. Very well satisfied do they appear at thus serving the end for which they were created. It must be not a little to feel that they are doing that!

There are men, again, whose main end and object of existence consists in their skill in making a difficult losing hazard off a ball lying close to a cushion, at billiards. It is not everybody that can do that !

There are people who place before themselves as the end at which they aim, an announcement in the newspapers that their personalty has been sworn under some enormous sum by their executors. What a consolation it will be to them when dead to know that !

Another end for which many strive is to write books which shall live after them. So long as their works have immortal life, what does it matter, think they, whether their souls have

it? Just consider, for a moment, the gratification it will be to you, five hundred years hence, to hear learned professors declaring that, after all, there is no authority upon certain subjects to be compared with yourself! What a pleasure, too, it must be to the defunct humourists to see people splitting their sides with laughter over their aged jokes, and how greatly such a sight must add to their own hilarity. Best of all, how satisfactory to observe that a book, which scarcely paid its expenses during your own lifetime, went through twenty editions afterwards. How you will chuckle over that!

I am sorry to be obliged to change the subject rather abruptly; but my notice of this portion of the exercises

obliges me to do so, unless I am to make a serious omission. In an early part of this section we agreed that the man of the world refused altogether to show any gratitude towards his benefactors, or even to think much about them; one important subject of the Ignatian exercises was thus necessarily excluded. But its opposite remains. I allude to that endless source of fun and amusement, that fountain of infinite humour, that time-honoured joke, that little five-lettered word which never fails to raise a smile—the Devil!

Second Day.

YOUR first exercise to-day will be a repetition of the satisfactory conclusions at which you arrived yesterday; namely, that you live only to yourself, and for yourself, with the consequences of such a theory.

One of these consequences must be that the only sins you can acknowledge, are sins against yourself. It may be that you would recognise certain acts as sins, when you are not the direct and immediate object of them; but you would only do this because, if such offences were to be

allowed to go unpunished, neither *your* life nor *your* property would be secure. For instance, it is nothing to you, *ipso facto*, that your next-door neighbour should be robbed and murdered. If, however, the man who committed these outrages were to be allowed to go free, he might presently come to your house and rob and murder you. That *would* be something to you!

Your interest in the common weal is entirely owing to the fact that, upon the whole, it conduces to your own welfare, and you are in favour of the Crown and Constitution for the same excellent reason. Your "Religion of Humanity" is, on the same principle, a Religion of Yourself; because your anxiety for the good of humanity does not spring from any wish on your part

to benefit humanity in general, for which you do not care one jot; but from your desire for a share of the good, which you hope to derive from the united efforts of the majority of human beings for the welfare of their species.

Personally, you are only deterred from crime by the penalties awarded to it by your fellow-men, and you are only prevented from minor offences by the same means. You observe the rules of etiquette, "good form," and, up to a certain point, those of morality also, merely because to infringe them would lead to your exclusion from good society.

As I have already said, the only real sin, in your mind, if that mind logically follows your premises, is any

offence against yourself. No words should be strong enough to express the exceeding sinfulness of such a sin. You have proved, that the whole world and all that is in it exists for you alone, in your eyes; what, therefore, in those eyes should be the iniquity of any creature in that world who commits such an act of rebellion against the object of its existence as to offend against yourself. If you were to take the life of that creature in the most cruel manner imaginable, it would not be resentment, but simple justice. Your extraordinary mercy in sparing the lives of so many of your enemies is truly a beautiful trait in your very attractive character.

Probably half the pleasures of your

memory are connected with what others than yourself call sins. You love to live them over again—to sin them over again—in spirit. You like to remember that you did not lose a certain opportunity of sinning. You reflect that you hesitated, that the peculiar sensation, known among superstitious people by the name of conscience, almost held you back, that fear of the consequences nearly stopped you at the last moment ; yet, as you call to mind with pride, you went on, you took the forbidden fruit, you enjoyed it intensely, and, best of all, you escaped the dreaded penalty. All this you look back upon with the greatest satisfaction, and you congratulate yourself upon having acted as you did. Some of your pleasantest hours are passed in self-

examination. You remember this bad action and that misdeed, and you are glad you committed them.

With what gratification you think of a memorable dinner-party, at which rival amusing-men had tried to outvie each other in saying good things—a course of behaviour which, to give them their due, they rarely condescend to follow, as they much prefer to work single-handed—until everybody seemed tired out with laughter. During a lull in the conversation, you, who had hitherto been silent, took an opportunity of coming out with a jest of amazing profanity, but of such exceeding humour, that the whole tableful of people was convulsed, and it was generally admitted that you had said the best thing of the evening. You have never ceased to

rejoice at having made that blasphemous joke.

On another occasion, what fun you had in making Muggins drunk! You remember the way in which you persuaded him to imbibe a great variety of wines during dinner, ending by inducing him to try "the good old Tory custom" of taking a long thin glass of ale with his cheese. Then you talked "vintages" with him after dinner, and plied him with claret until he would take no more. But even then you would not leave the poor man alone. There was a wonderfully fine old port upon the table, of which he "*must* try one glass." By the time he had had his coffee and a glass of your Chartreuse straight from the monastery, you had reduced your victim to the con-

dition in which you wished to present him to certain of his friends, and his conduct in the drawing-room not only afforded you unqualified satisfaction at the time, but delightful memories whenever you recalled the edifying incident.

Your examination of conscience usually ranges over deeds far doughtier than these two dinner-sins, and of natures which render them unsuited for my pages. You are, yourself, rather particular as to what appears in print, but in respect to your own thoughts and actions you are not quite so squeamish.

Although they cannot cause you the gratification of recalling personal pleasures of the past, you find scandalous stories of others pleasant hearing,

and afterwards pleasing memories ; partly, perhaps, because they prove that you are not so very much worse than some of your neighbours, and partly because you think that if the misdemeanours common to you and others should lead both you and them into undesirable quarters, it would be a case of "the more the merrier."

It is for external use, however, that scandalous anecdotes of other people are chiefly valuable. For this purpose they are worth more than gold and precious stones, and the worldly-wise man collects and treasures them as he would diamonds of the finest water.

There is nothing that gives more pleasure to a large proportion of the human race than to hear evil reports

of their friends, provided always that those reports be conveyed in such a manner that the hearers shall not be in any way required to come to their friends' defence. Just as the killing of one little fox will give a day's amusement to all the hunting men in a county, so the moral fall of one individual will afford a month's pleasure to a large neighbourhood of his friends. So great is the rejoicing of the ninety and nine just persons, that the sinner may almost claim to be a martyr for the common weal, and, in that sense, if the greatest happiness of the greatest number be taken into consideration, his crime can very nearly be regarded in the light of a virtue.

So long as the ninety and nine are chuckling and laughing, what

matters it that a poor deserted wife is crying her eyes out in her bedroom, or forcing back her tears before servants whom she can scarcely look in the face, and friends whose professions of sympathy appear to her little better than mockery? What matters it that a broken-hearted mother feels that life has no longer hope or pleasure for her since her only child, the son who was her idol, has proved himself to be an unscrupulous libertine or adulterer, and has entangled himself beyond hope of recovery? What matters it that a girl, who once had a happy home, will before long be starving in a garret, disowned by her family and deserted by her paramour? Little trifles of this sort are of no consequence, provided we have a racy bit

of scandal to talk about at the coverside, a subject for ill-natured old ladies to cackle over, or an "illustration from life" of certain topics of the smoking-room and the club-window.

Just consider for a few moments what a blank the world would be to you without what is called sin! Nor would this be entirely owing to the absence of the pleasure of committing peccadilloes on your own account. Imagine what it would be to go to your club and find "no news" of any sort beyond panegyrics upon the excellence of your fellow-creatures; to go to dinner-parties without hearing a breath of scandal or an uncharitable remark; to sit up into the small hours in country-house smoking-rooms without hearing a single sentence

that might not be preached from a pulpit!

Would you look forward to the arrival of your book-box from the library, would you care to take up a newspaper or a magazine, if you were certain that you would never find an unorthodox opinion, an expression which could raise a blush on the cheek of the most modest school-girl, or an account of a deed that was unsaintlike? Would the knowledge that there could by no possibility be a ripple upon the universal peace, increase your interest in the Foreign Telegrams? Would you be able to suggest some other matter with which to fill the spaces in your newspaper at present devoted to Law Reports? Would the absence of Naval and Military Intelligence and correspond-

ence about ecclesiastical squabbles be easily supplied ?

All this considered, would you wish the world to be sinless ? Not a bit of it ! A world without a devil in it would not be at all to your taste. You may not admit the existence of the devil ; but, if devil there be, it would not be very difficult, directly or indirectly, to trace the greater part of your pleasures to that potentate.

Do you ever think upon the debt of gratitude which you owe to our mother Eve ? How many of your enjoyments would have been curtailed, or altogether wanting, if she had not taken the apple ? Were it not that we had agreed you should never feel thankful to anybody for anything, it would almost seem that the whole of

your spare time ought to be spent in offering up *Te Deums* for the fall of our first parents in the Garden of Eden.

Third Day.

YESTERDAY we ended by pointing out that most of your pleasures were owing to the kindness of Eve in falling for you, and to the devil in catering for you. Between them they have made the world what you delight to find it.

And what an excellent world it is! Think of our marvellous advances of science, of our machinery to save labour and starve the labourer, our steam-engines and our nitro-glycerines, our railways and our accidents, our increase in surgical skill and our increase of cancer, our goings to the bottom of the sea in ships, and to the

bottom of coal mines never to come up again, our hundred-and-ten-ton-guns and our burstings, our wonderful knowledge of medicines and our influenza, our electricity and our locomotor ataxy, our riches and our slums, our Stock Exchanges and our failures, our County Councils and our Jobbings, our Peace Society and our coming great war, our emancipation from superstition and our Mahatmas, our philanthropy and our tea at ten guineas a pound, our—; but if I were to go on describing the virtues of this dear, good world of ours, I should require volumes instead of pages.

Wherever we go, we see nothing but happiness, in this happiest of happy worlds. Everywhere is contentment, peace, and goodwill.

It is something that man has do-

minion over the beasts of the field, as I said to myself when my horse bolted down Piccadilly with me. Unfortunately his fellow-man is usually less tractable.

Steam and electricity, however, are still comparatively in their infancy, and we are not likely to have to wait long for machines which will subdue pride, covetousness, lust, anger, gluttony, envy, and sloth (in others). We shall probably have just to turn a handle, or press a button, and the instruments will do the rest.

Possibly, when these contrivances are perfected, they may be so constructed as to extract the qualities mentioned from our neighbours and transfer them to ourselves. As you are at present, you may fairly claim to be a faithful imitation of your ances-

tress in Eden: when you shall have been invigorated by the new patent extractor and transferrer, you will most likely be almost on a par with the tempter to whom she yielded.

Are you a magistrate? If so, do you sit in judgment upon others in the police courts? Is it not a consolation to you, upon those occasions, to reflect that, at any rate, *you* will never be judged; that there is no bar at which you can by any possibility stand as prisoner, while your funny friend, the devil, gets into the witness-box. So you think at least!

If you should suddenly find your temporal condition at an end, and your "ego" put upon its trial, it would be a curious sensation, would it not?

The turn which our meditations have

taken reminds me of another subject—Death. What are called “sensible people” would say:—“Don’t think about it. Some day or other, you will, of course, ‘go over to the majority,’ and when that event comes off, the chances are that it will be a happy release. In the meantime, sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. Besides, those sorts of things are very much better understood than they used to be! There are chloroform, chloral, cocaine, and injections of morphia, so that, when you have to pass away, you will probably know nothing whatever about it. You will just go to sleep. That will be all!”

And will there be any waking up?

“My dear fellow, don’t trouble your head about that. You are certain to go where gentlemen go; and that is enough for you to know.”

Possibly so. At the same time, it may be well to remember the saying that “adversity makes strange bed-fellows.”

Such questions, you will say, as these are not of nearly so much consequence as they used to be before modern thought had done away with eternal punishment. You have only to go to a dentist and let him pull out one of your larger molars to convince yourself of the fact that pain is of no consequence so long as it is not eternal. A few milliards of years spent in the endurance of tooth-extraction would be a mere nothing. Besides, there would be no “material

fire" about the operation, so who could fairly object to it? And it is a holy and a wholesome thought that, if there be a hell, it may contain plenty of doctors provided with hypodermic syringes, anæsthetics, and sedatives.

I think I hear one of my readers saying:—"Not quite so fast! I am an egoist; my sole object is to please myself; but I am very sound in my religion. I believe in eternal punishment; if I do not fast twice a week, I go to church twice on Sundays, which is worse, and I give tithes of all that I possess. In short, I am far too good an egoist to wish to be damned; for to go to hell would be neither to my pleasure nor my profit."

Whether egoism is compatible with religion is a question into which I am not disposed to enter in this little

treatise, and on that point, all I need do is to admit that many people behave as if it were so.

There are at least three kinds of religious egoists. The first are religious because they think that to be so will be conducive to their own personal interests—for those of their God and their neighbour they care not; the second try to outshine their neighbours in religion, as well as in luxury, pomp, hospitality, and wealth; the third take up religion as they would take up architecture, geology, whist, politics, or old china, for a hobby, an interest, and a kill-time.

Oh yes! There are unquestionably such persons as religious egoists, and few egoists are so egoistical; nevertheless, their numbers, in comparison

with other egoists, are few, and the position of this minority may be regarded as somewhat heretical by the majority. Indeed, the pious egoist might not altogether inaptly be called a sort of schismatic by the professors of the philosophy of egoism pure and simple. From such, therefore, I will turn for the present, and address myself to the orthodox egoist.

You, who have cast aside all superstition, can afford to smile at these things. Your creed has not been derived from the words or writings of people who have made God and the soul the study of their lives; but from those of geologists, chemists, botanists, and physiologists, who are clearly the best authorities upon topics of a nature so directly opposite to their usual fields of research, as the spirit

and the next world. The marvel is that people who have money to invest, do not likewise consult these same men of science, as infallible authorities upon the mysteries of the Stock Exchange. Why not, *per contra*, recognise priests and parsons as the only authorities upon scientific questions, and stockbrokers upon religious ?

I feel constrained, in the course of these exercises, to give a few practical suggestions which may be useful in confirming you in the only course which you are at all likely to follow—your own way.

One is, never to do anything by rule. If you do, there is no saying into what strait-laced habits you may eventually be led. The author of most of your pleasures is not exactly the Champion of Law and Order.

Act first and think afterwards, and you will find that a very little acting will give you cause for a great deal of thinking.

A safe maxim in selecting your pleasures is only to choose those that are either very expensive, very unwholesome, or very wicked.

Never lose a moment of possible enjoyment. A moment not enjoyed is a moment wasted. Next to enjoying yourself, the best thing you can do is to prevent others from enjoying themselves.

On no account admit that you have been happy. Always imply that things have not been good enough for you. If it should be quite impossible to pretend that they could have been better, say that you wish you had been doing something else.

Let luxury become an ingrained habit. It is one not very difficult to acquire, provided you have the necessary *£. s. d.*

Resist your conscience, and it will flee from you.

Do not believe anything that you hear, and only believe half what you see.

There is a triad of things which, come what may, you must never do. The first is to admit that you have done wrong; the second is to allow that you have made a mistake; the third is to make restitution for an injury.

Talleyrand is reputed to have said : — “ Do not write a letter to-day which

can possibly be put off till to-morrow." To this maxim, I beg to make an important exception. If the letter would be an angry one, write it to-day, at once ; you cannot write it too soon ; if it would be a pleasant one, by all means put it off till to-morrow, or even longer.

Always keep disagreeable correspondences. There is no saying when they may not be useful. If you should become reconciled to your foe, it will be well to let him understand that you have his letters safely locked up in a drawer. Read them occasionally. This will engender a spirit in you which will be very pleasing to—well, some one.

Never to do that which you can get anybody else to do for you, is a time-worn and most unexceptional axiom ; but it has an equally important corollary which is not always sufficiently

enforced. It is, never to pay for anything for which any one else will pay for you. Even where you must pay, you will naturally keep your tradesmen waiting for their money as long as possible. It is nothing to you that, with such a large and doubtful debt as yours owing to him, a small country shopkeeper does not feel justified in sending his delicate child for a fortnight to a little quiet watering-place, which has been very strongly recommended by his doctor ; that your debts, combined with those of some of your friends, or men of your stamp, have compelled another tradesman to suspend payment ; or that far poorer people than yourself, who pay their bills regularly, have also to pay, in the form of high prices, the bad debts owed by yourself and such as you.

In the days of St. Ignatius of Loyola, self-mortifications were considered highly salutary. They have long since disappeared, with bleeding, black draughts, and other atrocities. Nevertheless, I will prescribe one for you. Should you feel inclined to do a good-natured thing for anybody, deny yourself, and refrain from doing it.

Give servants as much trouble as possible. Don't forget that John Thomas is not made of the same flesh and blood as you are.

Keep nothing but beautiful things about you; for they are generally the most expensive. If expensive things are ugly, swear, by all that is holy, that they are beautiful.

Cultivate the habit of saying dis-

agreeable things. If we direct our attention to it, it is wonderful how often we may find an opportunity of saying an irritating word. In this, as in all else, practice makes perfect. Bear in mind that in giving pain to one person by a sarcastic remark, you may give pleasure to many bystanders, and that the greatest good of the greatest number is to be considered. Unkind words break no bones, and a stinging reply frighteneth away a wrathful man—sometimes.

Look back over your whole life, and see how far you have lived up to, or fallen short of, the standard here set before you. If you have come up to it, what a beautiful character is yours! How attractive must you be to men and angels!

Consider the marvellous splendour of one like yourself placing himself before every other creature and living to himself only. You are a unit in the number of living men. The population of the British Empire alone is computed at about 343,431,000. Add to this the population of other nations, and you will find that your own precious person does not form a very large fraction of the human race. But the total population of the world is but a fraction of a fraction compared to the generations and generations that have lived before.

Look out of your window, some clear starlight night, and compare this tiny earth and its generations of populations, with the myriads of other worlds; each of which, for anything that we know, may have had its gene-

rations of populations. And then, if you are not too "enlightened" to believe in angels and devils, think how many there may be of them also. Now contemplate the possible number of worlds, generations of populations, angels and devils; or, if you will, count only the worlds which you can see with the naked eye, and take the lowest reasonable estimate of the number of people that have lived upon this earth, and think what *you* are, that you should say to yourself that everything and everybody exists, has existed, and will exist for you and you alone, for your precious "ego" and it only.

Ah! you tell me, you never have said, nor ever will say, that they exist but for yourself.

No, my friend, perhaps not ; but you *act* as if you thought so. Deeds, we know, are better than words. Very magnificent, indeed, is the standpoint which you assume. " Devilish magnificent ! "

Fourth Day.

THERE are certain things which the generality of men dread and dislike. Among these are the unseen powers, being meddled with, being put under an obligation to anybody, good advice, being made to give up what they like, and renouncing their own will to follow that of another. Were I to give you the Ignatian retreat for the fourth day, I should have to go fully into certain of these details under somewhat different forms; as it is, I will spare you in the matter, so far as I can, leaving you to turn your attention to them as you may think proper.

I must now ask you to imagine the world going on much as you would have it; yourself rich, prosperous, popular, and living and acting in the manner hinted at towards the end of our meditation of yesterday, while others are more or less miserable and unhappy.

Suddenly the news is conveyed to you, that some power beyond this world—say a spot on the sun, a dynamo in Saturn, or anything else you like to imagine—is about to influence this earth in a manner which will be immensely for the welfare of its inhabitants during the second, third, and fourth quarters of the remainder of their lives, but will entail hardships and poverty during the first quarter. So far as you are yourself concerned, it is proved, beyond all question of a

doubt, that you will live for forty years longer, and that the unseen power proposes that for the next ten years you shall become, from a very rich, a very poor man, and have to endure hardships, sufferings, and humiliations; but that, for the following thirty years, you shall be inconceivably more wealthy than you ever were before, but live among others as rich, or richer than yourself, and spend all your time and your money in doing honour to a very great man indeed, who will then be the leading personage in your county. You have the option given you of accepting these terms, or of living for the next ten years exactly as you are doing at present, and spending the remaining thirty in want and misery.

Would you not be inclined to say, under such circumstances—"Confound

it, why could they not leave things as they were ? ”

Even when it should be explained to you that, if the new arrangement had not been made, your years following the next decade would be very unhappy ones, you would not feel particularly grateful. The terms themselves you would probably accept ; but grudgingly and of necessity, nor without some hesitation.

After all, you would say, may there not be some mistake ? It is true that astronomers and mathematicians have made the thing look a certainty in black and white. I am sure I must have gone over the figures more than fifty times, and they appear to be all right. I cannot find a flaw or an error. Nevertheless there *may* be some miscalculation which I do not see, and those

ten bad years to begin with are what I don't like. A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. Upon my word, I am half inclined to go on as I am, and let well alone. Who knows but that, towards the end of the ten years, I may be given another chance of making a bargain—say one *very* bad year just at last, or something of that sort. This little allegory may afford you food for meditation. For the present, we will dismiss that subject.

I dare say you find the possibility of an omnipotent force, unseen, but ever present, an unwelcome, an irritating, and a disturbing thought. Many people do.

Nothing vexes you so much as that anybody should allude to it; yet you often revert to it in your own mind, nor in the manner most complimentary

to the unseen power. You profess never to think about it, or to worry your head about it; yet it haunts you and makes you miserable. You hate the very idea of it, you dislike to hear it named, and mentally you add an "if there be one" whenever you speak of it. Any direct mention of it you deem as indecent as that of those things which are unspeakable in English and barely tolerable in French. Although you try to be sceptical, you still believe in it, and while you strive to lessen the numbers that acknowledge it, you are desperately afraid of it.

The most repugnant thought of all is that something may be required on your part from this "it"—I spell it with a small "i," because otherwise I doubt whether you would read what

I write. Should you some day find it spelt differently, that will be your affair!

Now there is only one question which I have to ask, and that is, Are you prepared to enlist under the standard of this essence, whose existence you question but believe in, and are you determined to make war against everything which is contrary to its spirit?

There are people who say that there is a constant warfare between this essence and some one else—your favourite laughing-stock; that the one can never be reconciled to the other; that each has his Kingdom, as distinctly as if they were drawn up under separate standards at a distance from each other on a large plain, that every living person must take his

place under one or other of these two standards, and that if he will not be at the trouble of choosing for himself, one of them will be chosen for him, nor that the most satisfactory. To the latter standard there are said to be three allurements, or steps—the first is riches, the second is honour, the third is pride. I mention these traditions, not that you are in the least likely to believe in them, but because, from their antiquity, I think you may find that they possess a certain archæological interest.

I fancy I hear you say that you know of only two great rival camps. One is that of Common Sense, the other that of Superstition.

What is Common Sense, and what is Superstition? The former is what

you believe ; the latter is everything beyond the limits of your belief.

Superstition, it will be observed, has in that case rather a wide range.

Here the interesting question presents itself whether people are more likely to be damned for believing too little, or for believing too much ; but this only in passing.

It may be worth noting that common sense varies considerably ; for, at one time, you have believed one thing, and, at another, another.

I venture to hope that my book will be read by more persons than one ; when, therefore, I say "you," I am addressing myself not to one you, but to several.

Probably some of them will say to me that there is no superstition in

believing that the ghost of a lady, with powdered hair, and in a white dress, walks half-way down an oak staircase in an old Elizabethan house and then disappears ; but that it is gross superstition to believe in any of the apparitions mentioned in the Bible or the Lives of the Saints.

Others might tell me that a certain medium undoubtedly floated in the air, while they refuse to admit the credibility of any miracle attributed to a religious origin.

A living writer of not a little common sense declares the re-incarnation of the Grand Lamas to be a scientific fact, yet he denies the existence of a personal God.

A friend, who is looking over my shoulder while I write, suggests that

it is dangerous to give way too much to common sense ; but he, of course, is a fool.

I know a man who is not at all afraid of taking God's name in vain, but is terribly alarmed if he has to sit down "thirteen to dinner," and another, who fears not God, but fears a magpie.

Before dismissing the subject of superstitions, I will tell you, in case you may not already know it, the "sensible" manner of using and not abusing churches, chapels, and cathedrals. They are very good things in their way. You should admire and criticise them from the outside. Needless to say, you could have made them much better yourself ; still, all things considered, they have their beauties, and these you will acknowledge. You may go inside and walk about in them,

pointing out what is good and finding fault with what is bad, specially animadverting, in foreign churches, upon the sacrifices of artistic taste to the conveniences of religious worship. You may sit down in them and listen to the music, enjoying it at the time and voting it "poor," or "florid," afterwards. You may go into them to hear sermons, which you will criticise as if they were three-volumed novels or theatrical performances. If the buildings are shrines of the denomination to which you are a nominal adherent, you may even read a prayer-book in them. Of one thing, however, you must on no account be guilty, and that is, praying in them. Should you do that you would forfeit the good opinion of the world.

I must now revert for a moment

to a subject suggested by an earlier section of to-day's meditations, in which an allusion was made to the mediæval theory of the two Kingdoms. It used to be taught that one of the leaders—not your leader, but the other—required his followers to be prepared to endure poverty and contumely in this life for his sake. This gives us an opportunity of forming three practical conclusions.

The first is, that nothing is so odious as obloquy and contempt. It is quite conceivable that a man may be happy in living a very retired life ; but, in that case, it is necessary to his peace of mind that he should know, or suppose, that his name is ever in men's mouths. A hermit, who rarely sees a human being, may

well be content if he can feel that the world regards him as an oracle, and impatiently waits for his utterances; or an invalid, living in an out-of-the-way village in a foreign country, may reasonably be unwilling to change places with an ordinary individual in good health living in London, if he constantly sees his books praised to the skies in the reviews.

The second is, that to excel in almost anything, to be thought better than one's neighbours, and to hold a position which others covet, are things which make the heart happy, in the natural order. Nor are such ambitions exclusively confined to what are commonly termed worldly-minded people. The clergyman, to say nothing of any desires for preferment, likes to

be considered a better preacher than other clergymen, a better parish-priest, a better organiser ; the philanthropist, even if he is apparently modest in concealing his identity when aiding works of benevolence with his money, does not always deny himself the pleasure of reflecting that, although his name may not often appear in subscription lists (so anxious is he not to let his right hand know what his left hand doeth), many tongues are ever advertising his extraordinary beneficence and trumpeting in public the good works which he performs in secret. These excellent men may not admit, even to themselves, that they share any such feelings ; probably they would angrily repudiate them were they to present themselves to their minds ; but, curious as it may appear,

there is a good deal of human nature in all of us, whether we be good, bad, or indifferent.

The third—but is there any occasion for me to preach against the evils of poverty to men of the world like you? Poverty is the greatest of all iniquities in your eyes, the one deadly sin, the sin for which there is no forgiveness! It is very difficult to please one's self without money; therefore to be born rich, or, if one cannot be born rich, at least to die rich, is essential to practical egoism. He who is born in an out-house, of poor parents on the tramp, and dies, without a rag that he can call his own, by the hands of the public executioner, is the man whom you despise and abhor; he who is born "with a silver spoon in his mouth," and dies "rolling in riches,"

is the man whom you toady during life, and after his death, declare to have been one of the best fellows that ever lived.

Fifth Day.

IN the fifth day we shall have to compress a good deal of the Ignatian Retreat within a small compass ; this, therefore, must be my excuse if my style in it should appear somewhat jerky and inconsequential.

Do you take a pride in your pride? Are you the kind of man who "will not be trifled with," who "won't stand this," that, and the other, and with whom people had "better not try on that sort of game," &c. &c.? Do you stand upon your dignity? Do you "very soon put a stop to" things not quite to your taste? Do

you "know pretty well who means to be master here," and so on? If these are your sentiments, and if this is the tone of your mind, you cannot carry them out better than by taking as your example, Milton's Satan.

I do not say that you cannot attain to considerable firmness and great strength of character by imitating other models; undoubtedly you may. But, if you want to have a real "proper pride," you should study Satan—Milton's Satan, not Robert Montgomery's, or Dante's, or "the Devil of Scripture;" but Milton's.

Yet you rather shrink from taking the author of all evil as your fogleman. While there are some of his characteristics with which you confess at

least a sneaking sympathy, there are, on the other hand, attributes of good in which you find attractions; so what you practically aim at is a compromise, a sort of mixture of angel and devil.

Believe me that far the easiest, simplest, and pleasantest manner of obtaining this is to serve the latter pure and unadulterated. Moreover, he and his emissaries assume exactly the appearance you desire—a combination of devil and angel. They will do nothing to startle you. On the contrary, they will approach you under the garb of angels of light, and offer you pleasures which are innocent enough in themselves. The little things that they will wish you to do later on will be suggested so gently and gradually, and with such exquisite

taste, tact, and consideration, that you will be enabled to perform them without the slightest difficulty, or shock to your feelings. Here are one or two cases in which they will be at your elbow.

If you must needs be philanthropic, religious, or otherwise virtuous, you will, of course, show some originality, and, instead of following the old humdrum lines, you will strike out new ones of your own. You will receive much honour for doing this; you are also likely to gain followers thereby, and you will feel not a little proud of yourself and your doings. By degrees you will develop your new philanthropy, religion, or virtue into very original and unexpected forms indeed, and most unlooked-for results will probably follow.

If you have an uncontrollable mania for good works, it is obvious that, the more money you have, the more and the greater will be those good works; what a means to an end, therefore, is getting rich for the purpose of doing good! Any child can see this without demonstration. As you get rich, other things may increase besides your good works, nor does it necessarily follow that the latter will multiply exactly in the same ratio as your wealth. Here, again, unexpected results may follow.

Milton's great character will not be altogether displeased with you, if you rather enlarge the sphere of your material charities at the expense of your mental and verbal charities. The very fact of your great almsgiving alone may help you in contrasting

with it the deficiencies in this respect of others. But this is merely a detail. Charity, we know, covereth a multitude of sins, and one sort of charity may be piously believed to cover the want of the other sort of charity, if we are to judge from the way in which some people, who give away large sums of money, talk about their neighbours.

He who formerly

“in the happy realms of light,
Clothed with transcendent brightness,” did
“outshine
Myriads though bright !”

would like you always to look at the bad side of people ; for in nearly every living person there is a good side and a bad side. If a man has an excitable temper, but is a mag-

nificent singer, he would have you to forget his voice and to think of his temper. Here is a good-natured fellow; but he is as tall as a lamp-post. There is a kind-hearted man; but he is as dumpy as a beer-barrel. This lady spends her whole life in good works; but her puritanical face provokes you. Nobody can deny the charms of that pretty girl; but you say she has a voice like a peacock. John Doe is a very good fellow; but he is noisy and rough: Richard Roe is most amiable; but he creeps about like a cat. You would like Caius if his hair were not so red; and Balbus if his face were not so yellow; while admitting the fine features of Miss Jane, you declare that she is as inanimate as a statue; and in agreeing to the universal opinion that Miss

Jeanette's complexion is unrivalled, you say that it is more than counter-balanced by her abominable trick of twitching. .

I want you to realise what power all this places in your hands, and consequently what an influential personage you are !

Many a young fellow just starting in life, or girl in her first season, has been gravely injured, in social life and standing, by some such ill-natured word of yours, or of others like yourself. The saying of it afforded you only a minute's gratification ; but the mischief that followed has lasted for weeks, or months, or years. A great lady was intending to invite the object of your careless remark to her house ; but you just said enough to make her change her mind, and the girl's or the

lad's chance has gone. He, or she, may not have had many, possibly this may have been the only one, and it was lost—through you! What do you care? Nothing!

It has been said, and truly, that if one is moping about a trifling malady or worry, nothing makes it seem to become more insignificant, than to go to see the misery and suffering in a large hospital. This remedy for personal worries you may improve upon by rejoicing over the greater losses of others when you lose money, and by contemplating with satisfaction the serious illness of a friend, when you are confined to the house by a cold.

Another great consolation, when things do not go as we should wish,

is to grumble at them, especially when we can thereby make others, to some extent, sharers in our woes. A father of a family, who is vexed at losing a trifling sum, may pleasantly do this by telling his wife and children that it will put an end to their anticipated tour on the Continent or their proposed season in London, and if a man with the gout cannot make his family anxious for his recovery, in their own interests, who can ?

Subordinate members, as well as heads of families, may do much to engender a lively spirit in the home-circle, by provoking a habit of sharp speaking and telling home-truths. Smart retorts can be bandied in the bosom of a family with a freedom and an asperity impossible elsewhere. To torment another player until she

bursts into tears, is to win the game at this innocent pastime.

He who was "confounded though immortal" has no objection to your indulgence in love and affection, only they must be transferred from others to yourself. Does not charity begin at home, and is not centralisation a grand economic principle? He will also tolerate admiration provided that, like something else, it comes home to roost.

"The Bishop and Clergy of the Diocese and the Ministers of all Denominations of Christians" is a toast which he will drink with three times three; for do they not serve as a perpetual laughing-stock to his devoted followers? How many jokes they would lose without them!

Although he objects to your think-

ing much upon the many mercies vouchsafed to you, he fully approves of your meditating at great length upon those which others enjoy, and wishing that they had been bestowed upon yourself instead of on them. He would also encourage you in a spirit of contentment — contentment with yourself; but not with other people.

He would have you on your guard against impulses towards benevolence; when one overtakes you, he would wish you not to do anything hurriedly; to sleep over it, and if, when you wake, you should still be of the same mind, to sleep over it the next night.

Sudden qualms of conscience, he would advise you to regard with equal distrust, and when you are

the victim of them, he would wish you to talk them over with some old *habitué* of your club smoking-room, within that hallowed precinct.

It is often objected that divines assume a knowledge of the wishes and designs of the Almighty, to which they are not entitled. There may be some force in such a criticism; but I do not think that my acquaintance with those of "th' infernal Serpent" can be so fairly called in question.

I now want to call your attention to three kinds of men.

The first kind give way to every sort of wickedness to which their passions or their tastes incline them. They no sooner conceive one than they set to work and do not rest until they have accomplished it. If they

feel an illicit desire, they thoroughly satiate it, and then invent another. They are thoroughgoing and energetic in their own way; the way of unqualified iniquity.

The second kind of man also does many wicked things and wishes to do more; but sometimes he is deterred from them by fear, and at others by laziness. He is bad, *very* bad; yet he might be worse in act, if not in intention.

The third kind of man would like to be wicked. It would please him to be pointed out as a very fast fellow, who kept this sort of establishment and had appeared more than once in that sort of court. He would be proud to think that he had killed an opponent in a duel on the Continent, and that men should say it was

dangerous to insult him; nor would he blush to hear that his character for morality had been more than questioned. He would glory in being the author of a questionable novel, or an infidel pamphlet, and he would be delighted to break the bank half-a-dozen times a day at Monte Carlo, or to ruin a young fellow at écarté. Yet, somehow or other, while the spirit indeed is willing, the flesh is weak. He talks about doing things of this sort, and determines in his own mind that they shall be done; but he puts off doing them, and perhaps his own natural amiability helps to prevent him when he is on the point of executing them. And so time goes on, and the man does not actually perpetrate any very remarkable or noteworthy wickedness. To do so

would give him more trouble than he cares for; but for all that, his heart is thoroughly in accord with those who have the energy to take that trouble. They are his associates, his favourite companions, his chosen friends, and he speaks of them as capital fellows. He has not done much on his own account, it is true; yet I think we may assume that the master whom he has served with his intentions, if not his deeds, will take very good care that he does not go unrewarded.

At this period of the exercises, it will be well that you should seriously consider your estate and condition of life, and amend it as you may think fit. What an attractive spectacle you make, sitting brooding over your affairs and puzzling your head as to

how you can contrive to give more pleasure to Number One. Is there anything that he has not got that he would like to have? Is there any little extra pleasure that you can invent for his gratification? Is there any old servant whom he can discharge in order to fill his place with one smarter and more active? Is there no subscription that he can discontinue? Would your own dearly beloved self like to become a member of Parliament, or set up a stud of race-horses, or buy a famous picture, or take to collecting book-plates? Would marriage, upon the whole, be conducive to the happiness of self, or the contrary? Ask yourself to tell yourself candidly whether there is any selfish pleasure which you are denying yourself, and whether your

selfishness cannot be rendered even more selfish. Can your egoism or your egotism go further? If they can, and you make the ego the end of your existence, you are still imperfect—in your own eyes.

Sixth Day.

OUR meditations to-day, like those of yesterday, will necessarily be rather discursive.

I will begin by describing three degrees of humility, which may be found among thoroughly self-satisfied people.

In the first degree, they profess to have a very low opinion of themselves, in order that others may think better of them; indeed, their humility is of a kind which a follower of Ignatius of Loyola once described as "humility with a hook." There is this, too, to be said for them, that no honours

which might be offered to them would induce them to surrender one of their own opinions or inclinations.

In the second degree, they think so highly of themselves as to be quite indifferent to what the world may think of them. This degree is obviously more perfect than the first.

In the third degree, which is the most perfect of all, they absolutely take a pride in refusing honours, on the score of being already so celebrated that nothing can make them more so. "I, the great Wiggins," one of them will say to himself, "am so famous, that were I made Sir Timothy, or Lord Sloppington, after the name of my native village, I should absolutely lose, rather than gain, renown. People might ask who Lord Sloppington, or Sir Timothy,

could be; whereas Wiggins—everybody knows who Wiggins is, from Glasgow to the Cape of Good Hope, and from New York to Melbourne! As I walk down Pall Mall, I like to feel that people say to each other, when they see me, ‘There goes the man who rejected a seat in Parliament with scorn, and refused a peerage.’”

I will now offer a few maxims likely to assist you to

“Descend through darkness, on your road
with ease.”

They are the Beatitudes of the world, and you may regard them from whatever point of view you please. I merely state them.

If you are poor in pocket, do not be poor in spirit. That is to say, if you have not got riches, you can at

any rate wish for them. You are as good as any other man, and you will not be "put upon." On the other hand, if you are rich, wish you were richer, and dwell much upon the faults, vices, and dishonesty of the poor. You may also show your richness in spirit by making the poor, and especially "the poor rich," if I may be permitted the use of such an expression, feel their poverty as acutely as possible.

It will never answer to be meek and mild. Don't make yourself too cheap. Recollect that the world is very apt to take people at their own valuation; and remember that it is better to be overvalued than undervalued. Put yourself forward. Always try to be "getting on." If people are impertinent to you, give it them back

again. Do not let yourself be forgotten.

Whatever you do, keep up your spirits. Never give way to grief. Tears and mourning will do no good, either to yourself or to those that are gone. What cannot be cured must be endured. It is useless to cry over spilt milk. If you find other people in sorrow, try to distract their thoughts. Persuade them not to shut themselves up; tell them that long mournings have quite gone out of fashion, and try to make them laugh. You will thus be acting up to the spirit of your times. Best of all, keep away as much as you can from all who are mourning or in any trouble or scrape. Especially avoid such as are mourning the loss of money!

If anybody comes to you with a

long story about some injustice which he is suffering, you will know what to do, as it is the regular course followed by men of the world. You will refer him to some one else. You will say—
“Ah, well! If I were you, I should apply to the Clerk of the Post Quarto Office, and, if he cannot do anything, I should go on to the Commissioners of Stylographic Pens. Should both fail, I should be for writing a letter to the *Times*. Good morning. Oh! don't thank me. I am very glad to be of any use I can to you.” (Bang goes the door.) “Thank goodness, I have got rid of that fellow!”

To be too forgiving, says the worldly-wise man, is a sure sign of weakness. When wronged, and then only, you may hunger and thirst after justice!

“It is all very well,” you will say, “to talk about mercy; but right is right, and wrong is wrong. The man must be made an example of, for the benefit of other people. Wife and children, indeed! A man with his slender means has no right to have a wife—much less children. People of that sort ought not to be encouraged. Been ten years in my service, has he? Very likely; and a precious lot of money he must have made out of me, in the course of them. No doubt he has been robbing me all these years. It is high time he went. Ill, indeed! I should think so. A man is likely to be ill with his intemperate habits! What is this that you are saying about these cottages of mine? Out of repair, are they? All I can say is, that I shall be delighted to make palaces of

them, if the tenants will pay me ten per cent. on my outlay. They are let at a ridiculously low rent. I suppose the tenants will want bath-rooms and electric light, next. Really, I have no patience with people in these days." A "sensible man" knows better, again, than to beg mercy for others. He will not run the risk of offending a great man, or even a friend of his own standing, by interceding for a third person.

If you want to be popular, you will find it well to keep a good supply of rich smoking-room stories. Be all things to all men, you know! A few highly-flavoured anecdotes suitable to married ladies of high degree and low tastes, will also prove useful. Obviously, a man who knows something of the unhappiness and misery result-

ing from immorality, will think no other subject so suitable for jesting upon.

If two of your friends quarrel, you will be voted a fool if you interfere with them. Should you begin to meddle, there is no saying what it may lead to. Depend upon it, there are faults on both sides; so you will be wise in leaving them alone. Let them fight it out between themselves. Of one thing you may be certain, that you will get no thanks if you interfere. Besides, it is rather amusing to watch their quarrel, which is humiliating to both, and makes a little fun and a pleasant topic for gossip in the neighbourhood. Let the pot keep boiling.

You will, of course, invariably sacrifice principle to party. If, however, your party becomes unpopular, you will

watch your opportunity and desert it. Whatever you do, you will take care not to get into a scrape. If there is to be a row, you will not allow yourself to be dragged into it. If, in any matter, the cause which you are championing is disliked in high quarters, you will back out of it as gracefully as you can. Above all things, you will keep your religious opinions to yourself, if you have any, where they are not those of your neighbours. Then men will say: "Oh yes! I know that he is a Theosophist (a Roman Catholic, or an Agnostic, as the case may be); but you would never find it out from being with him. He is a very good fellow, and just like other people. I expect his religion is quite nominal. I only wish some of those canting fools of

our own persuasion were a little more like him." If you should be exposed to anything like public persecution for your opinions, you will write to the Radical papers. Nothing rouses them so much as religious intolerance, and they will give you a "leader." If men find fault with you, you will exercise your skill in repartee. If they tell lies about you, you can repay them in their own coin, adding a little interest for their loan.

I now want you to meditate for a little while upon toadyism, from the toady's point of view. His motto should be—"Aim high and you will strike high!" And what other more laudable object could he set before him?

In approaching this subject, I tremble lest I should seem to be suggesting

something which has almost an appearance of unselfishness; for a perfect toady has not uncommonly to deny himself, and he often gives pleasure to those whom he serves; yet the candid reader will admit that his ends and his objects are quite orthodox from an egoistic point of view.

The next best thing to having a fine house and fine things, is to enjoy the fine things and fine houses of others. The poor "Honourable," therefore, is wise in his generation when he makes friends to himself of the Mammon of Throgmorton and Threadneedle Streets. Such "a perfect gentleman" as he is will surely never be suspected of toadying, and his position virtually furnishes him with a license to practise that profession unharmed. It is a most satis-

factory method of obtaining the best of meats, drinks, horses, and shooting, free of charge, or nearly so.

On the other hand, if you are a rich nobody, the advantages of being on intimate terms with noblemen and noblewomen are evident. You will flatter them and do them little services, abuse their enemies, and bring them spicy little bits of scandal about their friends and acquaintances. In return for all this, they will come to your house and ride, drive, and walk with you, and you will pass off, socially, as being "all right," which, of course, is the most sublime condition that can be attained by man in this world.

It is true that most toadies have their enemies, and that there are uncharitable people who prey upon that particular kind of vermin; but every

creature lives upon some other creature in this world, and if the toady is liable to the pains and dangers, why should we grudge him the privileges of a parasite ?

After all, the confirmed toady is no more than a polite and gentle sort of egoist, nor do I think that he altogether compares unfavourably with certain other characters which may have risen before the reader's memory in the course of these meditations.

He is said to be mean ; of that I am well aware, and on this point I would ask, in what way he is inferior to the other paragons of perfection whom we have been discussing ? He lives and works for the benefit of himself. So also do the others. The latter may be com-

pelled to do something in return for the advantages which they obtain, and so, also, is he; nor are his labours invariably of the pleasantest. Do you call driving a dozen miles in a brougham (both windows up) with a dull and cross-grained old woman, to earn your dinner, nothing? Is it nothing to be the butt of a party of men twenty years younger than yourself, and to be "drawn" when you are in the middle of your beauty sleep? If you call the poor toady mean, my friend, look at home!

I want you next to imagine a particular case, and to meditate as to the course of action which you think "sensible men" would recommend under the circumstances.

A number of people are cheering

circumstances over which you have no control; if you are merely sorrowing about what you consider neglected opportunities, or actions of the past which you regret, calmly reflect that your present frame of mind is probably caused by acidity, liver, want of nerve-tone, or excess of natural diffidence. Be not perturbed. Always remember that no evil, bodily or spiritual, threatened or actual, can possibly appal the true philosopher.

Education, early associations, and innate superstitions inherited from ancestors still impel, and perhaps long may impel certain people, when in sorrow, to have recourse to so-called religious practices, which people of your profound wisdom could wish to have become obsolete. Well. If

it amuses people in trouble to do these things, the distraction thus afforded may bring them a little temporary relief; but the "sensible man" would have it distinctly understood that such performances are not to be continued. The concession may be yielded to their weakness that they shall, if they so please, state their grievances and their wishes devotionally; there, however, it must end! It must be done, if at all, once for all, and no more must be thought about it. Anything like a repetition, or what has been called praying "the longer," should never be tolerated, as such a proceeding would be morbid to the last degree. It is proverbial that men of the world never ask one another for a thing more than once: to do so would be as

humiliating as it would be useless. Every Prime, or other Cabinet Minister, and every person in an influential position, can testify to the fact that never, under any conditions, do people who "want" something, after once stating their case, revert to the subject a second time, either by word or by letter. That they never beg others to go to the great man and beseech him on their behalf is a necessary corollary.

There is, however, a form of devotion, which, while you cannot practise it yourself, you may perhaps connive at in others. It consists in the reading of beautiful poetry or prose, or the framing of fine thoughts of a religious nature, when the eye is looking upon splendid architecture or pictures, and the ear is listening to lovely music.

Under such conditions, what is termed prayer may be allowed, as it were, some poetical license; in short, it will probably, at such times, be little more than poetry, and, being refining and elevating, it is permissible. So long as devotion is subjective and not objective, so long as it consists of æsthetic enjoyments without any alloy of compunction, so long as it is centred purely upon self and seeks no end other than self-satisfaction, so long, I say, you may regard devotion as a harmless amusement.

I may notice, in passing, a condition of mind into which people, of whom you might expect better things, occasionally fall, and one that I am sure you will condemn. They may have apparently shaken off all traces of pre-

judice and traditional error, they may hold places in the forefront of the noble battle of spiritual emancipation ; they may even have stricken the fetters and manacles of sacerdotalism from others ; yet occasionally they will be seized with despair at the thought of what they once were and what they have now become, and they will worry themselves with the fancy that they were formerly the disciples of a faith which they have both forsaken and betrayed. Undesired recollections of childhood present themselves ; the patients, for you will look upon them as such, seem to see themselves children again, believing trustfully in things of which they now never speak by name, and happy in their faith. They remember the pleasure they used to feel in contemplating these

imagination; they think of their old hopes and fears, and of the efforts that they made to escape from the terrors suggested to their minds by the latter; they are reminded of resolutions, vows, and solemn ceremonies and sacraments which they formerly believed to be fraught with as many responsibilities as blessings. And then the scene changes, and their memories show them books which, when they began to read them, were forbidden, smiles and sneers at what they once had held dearer than life itself, first on the faces of others and afterwards on their own, lectures, conversaziones, and meetings in private houses at which old things were done away in the most sweeping sense of the word; and finally scribblings and spoutings on their own account against

things which they once held sacred. What are all such vain recollections; you will say, but reflex actions of the nervous system ?

If there be one thing that you neither can nor will tolerate, and hate more than any other, it is a false accusation against yourself. That is a thing, you say, which nobody can be expected to bear. To remain silent when spoken against, or written against unjustly, simply shows a mean spirit. Such at least is your doctrine, and certain of your correspondences in the daily papers bear witness that, on this point, you practise what you preach ; there are, indeed, few things upon which you pride yourself more than the brilliancy of your retaliation when your resentment has been provoked.

Let any one say or write an untrue word against yourself, and he may be assured that you will not fail to nail his lie where it may become the scorn of the world.

Quite as disagreeable as to be lied about is to be mocked and made fun of. A certain literary man—you know who the rascal was—in reviewing a book of yours, the other day, so far exceeded the limits of critical decorum, as to insinuate that there was nothing either bad or good in it, and that its author was, in fact, a harmless fool. When next you meet that reviewer, as meet him you will, at the coming dinner of the Scribblers' Club, you will have an observation prepared for him which will cause him infinite vexation, and obtain for you the

credit of saying a remarkably smart thing.

Let me ask you what is the best course to pursue when friends show one ingratitude or forsake one altogether. I will venture to give your answer. I think it would be that when such things happen there is only one course left open. Watch your opportunity for revenge! It is sure to come. In the course of your intimacy with them you have probably heard them say many nasty things of others; these you will first endeavour to recall, and then carefully treasure in your memory. If ever on the look-out, you are sure to find occasions for informing the people spoken against of the remarks your former friends made about them. Do this carefully and judiciously, and you will be able to make the ungrateful

ones regret that they did not keep you as a friend instead of making you an enemy. People will soon learn to think twice before they forsake you and fly, and you will gain the proud reputation of being a better friend than enemy!

I am not at all afraid that you will ever be led astray by the notion that there can be anything good in pain and suffering. The man of "culture" will never willingly contemplate aught else than the sublime and the beautiful; nor will he allow that a painful subject should be so much as looked at.

Let the eye perpetually seek perfection of line and colour, the ear pure harmony and gentle cadences; and if, occasionally, we stimulate the former by a bold contrast, and the latter by

a sudden crash of music or a cleverly introduced discord, we must ever keep within the limits of form, tone, and sound permitted by the rules of art. If, therefore, some ugly object, let us say an omnibus, comes into view, we should avert our gaze and meditate upon the exquisite ultramarine in the gentian, and if our glance happens to fall upon a fellow-creature in pain we ought to close our eyes and think of the opal tints upon the Mediterranean (on a calm day).

Poets have sung, theologians have written and preached, of the virtues of suffering for others. As a pleasing paradox, to while away an idle hour as you lie basking in the sun, amidst soft breezes and fair flowers, on a summer's day, that whim of the imagination may be entertained as a

passing fancy ; but the last decade of the nineteenth century has practically declared it to be one of the greatest fallacies to which human reason has ever condescended.

You, the perfect egoist, will never tolerate such fancies. Let us suppose that you had a brother, very like yourself in appearance ; that you were both employed, as young men, in the same occupation, and that you committed some illegal act which exposed you, if discovered, to a severe sentence in a criminal court. We will imagine that the crime was detected and you were on the point of being arrested, when your brother, in order to screen you, induced the authorities to believe that he had been the culprit. The similarity in your appearances made it easy thus to deceive them. He was

arrested, tried, and condemned to a term of penal servitude.

A word from you would have set the innocent man free and bound the criminal; but you never uttered it. You did not go to the court, when he was tried. It might have been dangerous ground, you thought. Fearing lest some chance word, which might fall from either in the presence of a warder, should lead to your incrimination, you did not even visit your brother in prison. The hard labour and rough fare were too much for him; he became ill, and he died without your going to see him.

Did you make yourself unhappy about his death? Not a bit of it! You were saved: that was all that was wanted. Even when you think

over his heroic act of self-sacrifice, you say to yourself—"Poor George. Of course it was very good of him; but, after all, what an ass he was to do it. I would not have done it for *him*. But then he was always a romantic sentimental sort of chap." If any one alludes to his imprisonment and death, you raise your eyes and shake your head, saying—"Ah, yes. George's fall was a terrible blow to us. He got into bad company. We try to think that he was led on by others, and that he was more sinned against than sinning. Poor George!"

I think I hear you saying that I have overdrawn my sketch. Should you say this, you are not true to your principles. If you are not an egoist, that is a different affair alto-

gether. In the latter case you cannot logically stop short of something very different, in which another picture of self-sacrifice, suffering, injustice, death, and the bearing of the penalties due to others would have to be considered.

During these peaceful days of retreat, your mind has been gently and gradually, but surely, gravitating towards the great doctrine that it cannot be worth while to bear anything for anybody else, saving and excepting when it is morally certain that you will be repaid with ample interest. This is your golden rule of life, the watchword of your humanity, the war-cry of your wisdom. If some one else will bear anything for you, you will let him bear it; but you will not fail to suspect him of doing so from

interested motives. By-and-by you will find out what it was that he expected you to do in return, and you will take good care not to do it! According to you, pure unselfishness is a pure myth.

Although you will say that the subject of death should be thought of as little as possible, you will make your friends promise to use their utmost endeavours to keep you firm to your enlightened principles when you come to die. It is a disagreeable fact that dying people, who have been unbelieving enough during life, sometimes become what you would call superstitious just at last. You will, therefore, enjoin your friends on no consideration to allow a priest or clergyman to come near your death-bed, even if, when lying on it, you

should implore them to send for one ; for it may be that weakness may make your brain a little unsteady at such a time. Finally, you will instruct them to declare that you died exactly as you lived, without faith, without fear, and without flinching, even if, through bodily and mental infirmity, you should permit some religious exclamations to escape your lips, or even howl in apparent terror at your prospect. But away with this odious topic of death and death-beds. Turn your attention rather to that which comes after death — your posthumous reputation. Obviously, your object then will be to have been successful in life. To have succeeded even in a bad object will be better, you think, than to have failed in a good one ; to have written one pungent squib that “ took ”

will be more satisfactory than to have impoverished yourself by yielding to the importunities of paupers, invalids, and collectors for charities. You would rather anything than that people should call your life a failure. How important to you, when dead, will be the obituary notices in the newspapers! How gratifying it will be to learn from them that you were an even greater and more celebrated personage than you had supposed! For a short time after your death, too, your very enemies will write and speak more or less well of you, and that will be peculiarly consoling.

Imagine, on the contrary, what it would be to find that no obituary notices of your great self appeared at all. Consider the misery of having

died a mere ordinary individual, who spent his money in pauperising the poor with alms and his hours in superstition! Ah, well. There are some things so appalling that the mind of man cannot contemplate them without trembling, and, as we have just been pointing out that only beautiful and pleasant thoughts are to be tolerated, we will turn our backs upon such horrors.

Eighth Day.

WE are now approaching the end of our Retreat ; the sweet peacefulness of meditation will soon be exchanged for the distracting hubbub of the world, and you will have to find your own way through its many and dangerous intricacies without my sapient hand to guide you.

You may have observed that it has been my endeavour, throughout these exercises, to conduct you exactly in the way which I thought you wanted to go, being fully aware of the wisdom of that ancient couplet, which cannot be too often quoted :—

“A man convinced against his will
Is of the same opinion still.”

We will first consider the steps which a large proportion of people take to awaken in themselves a spirit of gratitude. They reflect that they might have been born heirs to titles, or already titled, at the very least by courtesy; that they might have been the eldest sons of wealthy men; and that they might even have been royalties; on the other hand, that they might not have inherited the Muggins red hair, the Smith temper, or the Fitz-Plantagenet dyspepsia, and that they might have been without a great-uncle who kept a shop in Bond Street. Then they contemplate the vile climate of the country in which they live, the easterly winds, the fogs of London, the dead leaves, the thaws,

and the floods of the country. Next they think of their own inability to "add up," their difficulty in remembering names, or what cards are out at whist, and their vexatious habit of saying things which they would wish unsaid. In respect to the human body generally, they remind themselves that it might have been a much better body; that it might have been free from all liability to disease; or that it might have been improved by the addition of the trunk of an elephant, the jaws of a lion, the fins of a fish, and the wings of a bird. They contemplate the food which is supplied for the nourishment of their bodies, and reflect that the vintage of which they laid in such a large stock turned out but moderate; that the fish they had for breakfast was flabby, and that

the soup at Brown's dinner-party last night was cold. They consider the worldly goods with which they are endowed. If they have one thousand a year, how many there are that have two, or ten, or twenty! They give a passing thought to the excellent health that they enjoy. True, they are well enough; but they cannot walk five miles an hour like Jenkins, or "mix their liquors" like Cooper, or lift heavy weights like the "strong men."

Then one great object of their lives has been to get rid of all religion; yet, somehow or other, it always seems to be coming after them. They find themselves unavoidably in a church, and hear a sermon which sets them thinking and makes them feel ill at ease; they take up a magazine and

open it in the middle of a theological article which asks a question difficult for a freethinker to answer satisfactorily ; even in a novel they come upon a passage treating of serious matters that unsettles them. It seems as if religion was a sort of parasite, which clings to them, in spite of all their efforts to destroy and get rid of it. What a nuisance they consider it !

We started with the statement that you really loved yourself and yourself only. What then should you do for yourself ? You reply, without hesitation, Serve yourself with deeds, not words. On your own showing, you should never let an evening pass on which you cannot lay your hand upon your heart and say, " This day I have pleased myself in this way and that

way and the other way. From sunny morn till dewy eve, my whole endeavour has been to gratify myself. I have not wasted my time in thinking how I might give pleasure to others." And then you would say to yourself—"Take care, my dear Self, of your liberty, your understanding, your will, and all that you have and possess. They are yours: keep them. Dispose of them according to your own will. Give yourself the best of everything; for that is none too good for you."

Next you will consider for how much you have to thank yourself; how you might have spent your money upon others instead of keeping it for your own exclusive use; how much you made by selling that infirm horse to Brown, and that doubtful picture to

Jones ; or how sharp you were in that successful lawsuit with Robinson. In short, to use a vulgar expression, you will congratulate yourself on having "scored so much off your own bat."

On this, the last day of your Retreat, I propose to give you a few useful rules for your guidance in the future, in order that when you return to that world for which I have been fortifying you, you may bring forth the fruits of your period of retirement and meditation.

Here is a rule for the distribution of alms. Always regard them in the light of investments. Let me illustrate my meaning. If you put a sovereign into the plate at a church where you are not known, the money is gone for ever, and you will be

none the better for it; but if the Duke of Downybird casually mentions one of his favourite objects of benevolence, and you ask him as a personal favour to convey a "fiver" of your own to that object, there is no saying but that it may bring forth fruit in due season.

A second rule is as follows. When you feel disposed to give something to an impoverished person whom you like, restrain yourself. A third rule is, never to give anything to a person whom you do not like.

There is a precept, which is so firmly established among men and women of the world that it may be superfluous to notice it; yet, as I wish this treatise to be complete, I will deal with it as shortly as I can. It is, always to sneer at piety of all

kinds. Let people's differences of opinion upon religion be what they may, this forms a common ground upon which everybody may unite. Where all else is discord, here is harmony. Pleasant sneers at devotion awaken a sense of universal humanity, arouse the warmest sympathies, and awaken the tenderest feelings of brotherly love. Let the conversation be ever so dull, the standing joke of religious enthusiasm, if once mooted, will invariably provoke laughter and conviviality. Religion never seems to be out of season when allusion is made to it in this tone and temper; it never appears to be in season when spoken of in any other.

Rules, again, are necessary with regard to reading. If you have written any books yourself, you will, of course,

read them more than any others. If you take them up in a devout spirit, their study will engender a deep reverence for yourself and your doings. As to the works of others, the rule is simple. Never read them except to amuse yourself, to be able to talk about them, or to pick up some out-of-the-way information which may make you appear wiser than your neighbours.

Another rule is, to make a point of advancing each day in culture. You know, of course, what culture is. Culture consists in saying sarcastic things about the ignorance and want of refinement of others.

To those who come to make a Retreat with me, it is not necessary that I should say much on the subject of prayers; but I may observe, in passing, that people of the type

likely to read this book, who say any prayers at all, commend the habit of saying them in the bath in the morning, and in the bed at night.

Ignatius gives his disciples some rules about scruples. I have carefully considered the question whether I shall follow his example, and have come to the conclusion that it would be superfluous. Few, if any, of my readers are in danger of being tormented with what have been flippantly termed "screws," nor can excessive scrupulosity be called the crying sin of the age.

A modern Jesuit, who lately died an Archbishop, in his instructions on the last day of a Retreat, said:—"It is not a bad plan sometimes, instead of a meditation, to make a spiritual visit to all your friends, and see if

you cherish resentment against any, and if so, put it right in your heart. Be careful never to rejoice in the misfortune of your enemies."

Now, a very little alteration will turn this into a practical suggestion not unlikely to meet with your approval. You will not think it a bad plan sometimes, instead of thinking of yourself, to make a spiritual visit to all your friends, and see if you owe them any resentment, and if so, give vent to it as soon as possible. You will be careful to obtain an early opportunity of rejoicing in the misfortune of your enemies.

There is one important point, as to which the logically-minded egoist would evidently place himself upon his guard. I allude to the practice of pleasing others in order to please one's

self. It may be replied that this is sometimes, and to specially constituted individuals, one of the most selfish of all pleasures. This I do not for a moment deny ; yet it seems to me that from an egoist point of view it cannot be otherwise than a temptation and a danger—a subtle danger, by which the orthodox may be overtaken unawares. The insidious poison may seem perfectly innocent, at first ; as, for instance, where a selfish pleasure is taken in looking at the joyous smile of a child ; but the deadly influence is likely to spread gradually through the entire system of the person who indulges in it, until he may, at last, even go so far as to suffer pain and loss for the pleasure of pleasing others, when his so-called egoism will become neither more nor less than altruism.

Speculations as to eternal bliss are as old as mankind, therefore the modern philosopher need not be ashamed of indulging in them. Most nations would lose a large portion of their poetry, if all allusions to another life were suppressed and forbidden.

Ministers of different religions give us very varying descriptions of the world to come. If the wish be the father to the thought, the egoist would have little difficulty in picturing his "hereafter." It would be an eternity of self-contemplation, an absorption of self into self, and an adoration of self by self. If it would be possible to have a host of other worshippers, which would obviously be desirable, it would be well that they should include those that criticised and found fault with him on earth. The funny

egoist should be surrounded by a crowd of once rival funny men, perpetually repeating his "good things" with shouts of laughter; the egoist M.P. should have before him a kneeling congregation, formed of M.P.'s of "the opposite party," saying "Hear. Hear," whenever he speaks; the literary egoist should be accompanied through all eternity by a troop of envious authors reading his books aloud, and of reviewers praising them.

I did not start with the intention of giving "A Retreat for Ladies;" but, if any lady egoist should condescend to read this book, she might like to find in it a sketch of a "next world" to her taste. Let her imagine herself in a sphere of mirrors, so arranged that she might see herself in every aspect, with an admiring

audience of handsome men and pretty women, who, to her constant inquiry of "Do I look nice?" would ever reply, "My dear, we never saw you looking so well before!"

In taking leave of you, I suppose you will say that the best I can wish for you is that you may never find yourself in a place where the society would be "very mixed;" where you would have no income; where you would know no more than the "fools" whom you have laughed at, or possibly plucked; where your deep reading would be valueless; where your old servants would never touch their hats to you; where there would be no gossip, or jokes, or racing, or whist; where there would not be a novel, or a magazine, or a newspaper; where you could neither hear nor tell a good

story ; where you would never have an appetite or eat a good dinner ; where there would be no cigars, cigarettes, or pipes ; and where there would be countless crowds of the pious people at whom you are now so fond of laughing. It is commonly called Heaven ; but, if you follow the maxims advanced in this treatise, you may rest assured that there will be no danger of your going there.

THE END.

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